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The European Neighbourhood Policy introduces a new approach in the EU external relations with its interest neighbourhood; its strategic role is to provide a system which can allow the Union to set its external limits, without risking having new dividing lines in Europe. Yet, apart from the opportunities it provides, the ENP also shows some limits which risk depriving it of the pursued impact. The purpose of this research was to analyse the ENP system and identify, on the one hand, the elements of added value in the EU relations with Eastern Europe and, on the other hand, to set the measures that are compulsory for a real ENP contribution to the creation of a region of prosperity, stability and security in the area.

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1. The general context of the European Neighborhood Policy

The last European Union enlargement wave, called *the «big-bang» enlargement*, fundamentally changed the geopolitical context in Europe and created the conditions for the Union external vocation. Included in the founding projects, but marginalized by adopting the neo-functional integration method, the external dimension of the integration process had difficulty in being visible and remained in the field of inter-governmental cooperation. Nowadays the Union is organized enough and can become strong by strengthening its political dimension, in order to actively contribute to world peace and prosperity.

Consequently, interested in increasing its role on the external level, the European Union initiated a more and more coherent process of regional cooperation and openness within its geographic proximity in the last two decades, defined by three interest areas: Central and Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean Sea. The common elements of the different regional approaches were the following: peace, stability, promotion of shared values (especially democracy and fundamental liberties), commercial development and integration. The most successful component of the foreign policy was clearly the enlargement process. Yet, the Union enlargement cannot continue forever; at least, not concerning the option to maintain the present integration structures and the political unifying perspective. The limits of the institutional system, the low level of social cohesion, the weak European solidarity and identity, the difficulties to balance and coordinate the national policies for the functioning of the internal market and achievement of joint objectives, are only the most visible aspects which draw attention on the fact that the European union has reached the critical point in the enlargement process. Under these circumstances, the essential strategy aspect concerning the future of the EU was to find a system which could ensure the balance between the need to set the EU external limits and the provisions of the creating treaties. On the one hand, according to article 40 of the European Union Treaty, any European state can require accession to the Union, if it meets the shared values of the member states and the accession criteria. Despite the difficulties it meets and its less favourable external image, The Union maintains its attraction force and certain neighbouring countries have

already expressed their European tendency²⁴⁹. On the other hand, the more and more deepened intra-European disparities due to the accession of countries with a low development level show serious disintegration risks, able to go so far as to turn the European area into a purely free exchange area.

Consequently, forced from the outside to include new members and from the inside to steady its structures and make its functionality more efficient, The Union developed a new approach in the external relations with its neighbouring countries, at the border between cooperation and integration.

The Copenhagen European Council of December 2002, stating that *“the present enlargement creates the conditions for a Union with strong perspectives for sustainable development and for taking over an important role in consolidating stability, peace and democracy in Europe and abroad”*, mentioned that the European Union *is interested in strengthening the regional and cross-border cooperation relations with its neighbouring countries, “in order to fully develop the regional potential” [...] and to “avoid the risk of new European division lines”*(The Copenhagen European Council, Dec. 2002: 7). The European Council underlined thus the Union’s Intention, shown by the Council for General Affairs and External Relations of November 2002, to develop new relations with its Eastern neighbouring countries, depending on the level of their economic and political development, in order to promote the frame of a “Wider Europe”.

The solution advanced by the European Commission came in March 2003, within the Communication „Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours” (COM (2003) 104 final); it was briefly the project “Wider Europe – The new Neighbourhood”. In its essence, the Communication offered new perspectives of political and economic integration for the countries that cannot be accepted, for the time being, as members of the EU²⁵⁰, in order to create a security, prosperity, sustainable development and good neighbourhood area, *a «ring of friends» at the Union external frontiers, characterized by close and pacifist relations based on cooperation*”. The new set of foreign policy measures was subsequently grouped under the name of „**The European Neighbourhood Policy**” (ENP), in the Commission Communication of June 2004²⁵¹, which is presently a frame document of the ENP, together with the Communication concerning the creation of the New Neighbourhood Instrument of July 2003. The year 2004 also meant the beginning of implementing the ENP (The adoption of the Country Report and Action Plan), aiming at clarifying and structuring the EU commitment through the Contribution of the General Affair and External Relation Council, of the European Parliament and of the European Council. By its new policy, The Union has undertaken, conditioned by the achievement of certain criteria, to support the neighbour partner efforts to *„diminish poverty and create a prosperity and common value area, based on high economic integration, more powerful political and cultural relations, strong cross-border cooperation and common conflict prevention*”. For the most advanced countries, the Union „advances” even *the perspective to participate in the internal market, as well as the possibility to accede progressively to certain communitary programs in the cultural, educational, environmental, technical and scientific fields*. The European „Generosity” can be explained by the fact that, in the absence of an accession motivation (like in the case of the enlargement strategy), the offer had to be attractive enough, on the one hand, to limit the pressure from the EU neighbour countries to accede to it and, on the other hand, to make them undertake the necessary measures to develop a security and stability area on the European continent. During the closing session of the ECSA-World Conference of December 5th – 6th 2002, Romano Prodi made a synthesis, in the most

249 For example, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia and the countries from the Western Balkans. COM (2004)373 final, Brussels, 12 May 2004.

250Liberty, democracy, respect for the human rights and the fundamental liberties and the lawful state.

251 COM (2004)373 final, Brussels, 12 May 2004, page 5.

successful way, of the EU strategy essence towards the new neighbours: "*sharing everything with the Union but institutions*".

So, the strategy of the European Neighbourhood Policy was drawn so as to lead to the tracing of a „ring of friends” at the EU borders which share the EU objectives and fundamental values, countries which are under strong cooperation with the member states, also including a high level of economic and political integration²⁵². The method put forward in the strategy paper supposes: the definition of a *shared set of principles and values*, as well as *joint commitment to observing them*; a *bilateral framework*, integrated in the cooperation regional dimension, mainly aiming at the stability and security at the EU external borders; the definition, by mutual agreement with the partners, of some *objectives and priorities in key domains*, depending on each country realities; the *ENP periodical evaluation* and adaptation depending on the evolutions of the partner country; *setting certain reference economic and political criteria*, to allow for a clear and transparent evaluation of each country progress in meeting the undertaken requirements through the action plans; *the EU progressive engagement, subordinate to meeting the objectives of the action plans*; the Union will not provide new advantages if the partner country lacks progress; *ensuring coherence between the ENP instruments and the complementary policy instruments*; the ENP will be thus a reference framework; *the ENP integration in the security Strategy*, through contribution to strengthening the regional cooperation aspects and the mutual promotion of the EU objectives in the field of the Common Foreign and Security Policy; *generating added value*: clearer emphasis on the regional and bilateral adapted objectives; new territories; the passage from simple cooperation and trade mutual liberalization, in the short run, to the integration in the internal market, in the long run; strengthen political cooperation and even open progressively certain communitary programmes; new financial instruments; new contractual relations by adopting the European Neighbourhood Agreements.

In summary can appreciate that, the ENP method had proposed the development of the cooperation relations within a new reference frame, defined in relation to key objectives related to stability, security and sustainable development, based on the three EU current pillars: internal market, justice and internal affairs, foreign and security policy.

In the ENP, was integrated neighborhood area for the regional equilibrium and the European security strategy, respectively: Mediterranean Region (the countries participating in the “Euro-Mediterranean Partnership”, also called “The Barcelona Process”: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya²⁵³, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia and the Palestinian Authority²⁵⁴), Eastern Europe (“New Western Independent States” – Moldova, Ukraine, and Belarus – and Russia) and Southern Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan).²⁵⁵

As a result of those specified, we can say that through the integration and regional cooperation context, the ENP is able to stimulate the beginning of a large area of stability, peace, prosperity

252 COM (2004)373 final, Brussels, 12 May 2004, page 5.

253 Within the Barcelona Process, Libya is just an observatory.

254 Cyprus and Malta, Euro-Med partners, have lately become Union members, while Turkey is included in the pre-accession Strategy.

255 As an element of specificity, Russia, the most important partner in Union’s Eastern neighbourhood, takes part in the ENP only through association; the bilateral relations take place parallel to the neighbourhood policy, but separately and the joining elements are provided by the objective similarity and the common financing. The strategic partnership has in attention the creation of four common areas (Common European Economic Space)²⁵⁵: an economic area (including special provisions concerning environment and energy); a common space of liberty, security and justice; a cooperation area in the security field and an area of research, education and culture. The situation is mainly the result of the issues raised by the EU influence in the area, leading to a dynamics of the EU-Russia relations based on certain procedures and mechanisms different from those adopted within the relations with other countries of the ENP.

and free movement which could be called, according to the European Parliament proposal, “**the pan-European and Mediterranean Region**”. Its identity elements would be *the joint action areas*– political, economic and security areas, based on sharing certain *values*: the rule of law, democracy, the fundamental liberties, human rights²⁵⁶.

2. The ENP opportunities and limits in relation to Eastern Europe.

Mainly developed on the existing regional cooperation agreements, the ENP marks a new approach in the EU external relations with its Eastern “interest” neighbourhood, both through the system of organizing the neighbourhood relations (integration according to the concentric circle pattern) and through the adopted method (bilateral framework); the passage from cooperation and commercial flow liberalization to integration on the internal market on the short term; the correlation, for the first time, of the internal instruments with the external instruments. In fact, the ENP suggests a system of strengthened cooperation in the economic, social and politic fields, having at its core the economic and commercial integration. The strategic objective is that of ensuring the stability and security of the EU Eastern borders through a process of “Europeanization” of the neighbouring countries which could strengthen at the same time the Union role in the region and on the world political and economic stage.

The ENP opportunities are mainly related to: *the clearer structuring of the EU policies and actions, by insisting on priority objectives* within a unitary strategy which correlates the foreign policy objectives with the internal policy objectives; *strengthening the EU position on the international level* and increase the Union potential to contribute to peace and security on the continent and beyond; *stimulating the economic and administrative reforms* in the neighbouring countries, promoting the European pattern of the social market economy and supporting the implementation of a sustainable democracy system based on the European shared values; *stimulating the Eastern European countries in adopting the standards of good governing and European common values*, especially: liberty, democracy, observance of human rights and fundamental liberties, the lawful state; *organizing a political and cooperation framework in the field of justice, internal affairs and foreign policy*; even though, for the time being, the ENP does not provide instruments to develop this dialogue, they will come out of the cooperation process necessary to implement the action plans, providing thus important elements of added value in relation to the political “integration”; *managing more efficiently the common borders* (by improving the cooperation conditions related to migration, asylum, visa policies, border traffic, terrorism and organised crime prevention) and the association of the partner countries to certain aspects of the EDSP and CFSP (conflict prevention, crisis management, and so on); *promoting solidarity, the feeling of belonging to an area of the specific system values, especially by strengthening cooperation in the cultural, education, professional training and youth mobility*. The ENP will support the development of human resources, implementation of the Bologna process in the neighbouring countries and will extend the participation of these countries in the communitary programmes; *improving the technical and financial assistance from the EU*, the neighbour country emphasis on priorities through a progressive and differentiated approach established within bilateral agreements; *minimizing the borderline effects* in the EU Eastern borders, as well as *externalizing the integration benefits* upon the new neighbours, by setting the EU external limits, at least from the current point of view and *creating a favourable framework for sustainable development* through commercial flow liberalization, improvement of the investment climate, macroeconomic balance, improvement of competitiveness and transfer of technology and know-how; *minimizing the risk for certain dividing lines between the EU and the*

256 The European Parliament Report on the Commission Communication , Wider Europe and the new frame for the Eastern and Southern Europe neighbour relations, (document COM(2003) 104), 5 November 2003, p. 20.

neighbour countries, which generates instability and insecurity effects in the area, with a negative impact on the member states; *strengthening the EU position at the international level* and increase the Union potential to ensure peace and security on the continent and in the world.

Consequently, we may appreciate that the ENP provides a favourable context for the EU external relations with its new Eastern neighbours and has potential especially to support the economic development processes in the partner countries as well as the regional stability and security strengthening through cooperation in the JIA and CFSP fields, to minimize the discrepancies between the EU and the neighbour countries, to promote the European values in the region and abroad and increase the Union role as a global actor.

At the same time, the European Neighbourhood Policy shows certain **limitations** whose impact can go from the “Simple” reduction of the EU efficiency of action, to the deep reconsideration of the whole impact. The following aspects can become limits:

- *The ENP reflects the European Union prevailing position on the regional level, without providing the neighbour countries with a political cooperation structure attractive and strong enough to make them accelerate the “Europeanization” process;*

- *The beginning of the ENP takes place under the circumstances of a lack of balance between commitments and conditionality, minimizing the Union chance to act not only as directional and instrumental leadership, but also as structural leadership²⁵⁷ (by attracting periphery in a cumulative process of development and integration);*

- *Although the political dialogue is meant for the cooperation in the JIA and CFSP fields, they do not mention clearly the dialogue mechanisms and instruments, risking to deprive the mutual actions of the efficiency and coherence necessary to achieve the ENP multiple objectives;*

- *The difficult coordination of instruments and actions; the multiple complementarities of the ENP with different Union policies and actions mean the development of mechanisms to correlate the specific instruments in order to coordinate over 300 actions mentioned in the action plans; the EU strategy has not developed yet such mechanisms, except perhaps, for a NNPI, hence the risk of overlapping and inefficiency in using the resources.*

On the whole, it comes out that the ENP provides the opportunity to balance the EU external limits, having important strategic opportunities both for the EU and for the Eastern partners. It still remains to talk about its capacity to promote efficiently a pattern for development and cooperation at the regional level which removes the temptation of accession and ensures a broad pan-European area of prosperity, stability and security. An essential part in the efficient management of the relation between opportunities and limits in implementing the ENP, apart from the necessity of certain reconsiderations of the ENP system itself (aspects to which we will make reference in the conclusion chapter), will be played by the border countries and re

3. Conclusions and recommendations

The analysis realized in 2006 on the first stage of implementation of the ENP, and the proposals of the Commission from 2007 included in the Communication "A Strong ENP", draw attention to reduced efficiency and to the ENP limits, despite the results already obtained. This communication in 2007 propose a set of actions with potential to transform ENP into complementary a genuine policy of enlargement, but the proposals remain punctual. Seems rather an effort for searching some solutions for revitalizing the force of attraction of EU and for maintaining its power to promote the processes of Europeanization in the region. It remains to be seen if the EU will have the force to integrate the various approaches adopted in foreign relations

257 Denysyuk, V., (2005), *Politique de voisinage de l'Union Européenne. Quelques transformations sur le régime commercial régional en Europe* (Neighborhood Policy of the European Union. Some changes on the regional trade regime in Europe), in *Journal of Common Market and the European Union*, no. 485, p. 114.

in the regional plan in a strategic concept which to be unitary and coherent, that in perspective to allows it an active role in the region and at global level.

In conclusion, in order that the bordering countries valorise the most efficiently possible the ENP context in relation to the neighbouring countries, it would be necessary *to draw a strategy which implements the neighbourhood policy oriented on the ENP fields and objectives of the action plans, considering the complementary internal policies and the European Security Strategy*. If it were based on the functionalism method, the ENP implementation could contribute efficiently to a high level of integration of the neighbouring countries in the European; functionalism would provide not only the advantage of flexibility by integrating only the interest fields for the involved actors, without significant constraints, but also the advantage of integration progressivity by creating the necessary generating and convergence mechanisms in a possible perspective, even more remote, of the two countries accession to the European Union. From this point of view, functionalism would lead to the creation of a pan-European and Mediterranean region, *organized after the pattern of concentric circles: a hard nucleus* made up of the European Union (at a high integration level), operating as a diffusion pole of certain transformative processes in its Eastern and Southern neighbourhood to develop a wide area of stability, security and prosperity; a number of third countries, the most developed, participating in the *internal market*, and the last group participating only in the *free exchange area*. The idea, advanced by Jacques Delors within the proposal for the creation of a federation of country-nations, was appreciated in the 90's as a solution to the deepening-extension dilemma in the integration strategy of the EU, and later as a solution to the failure of the Constitutional Treaty.

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